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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to better understand creative visioning, the human ability to make connections. Interviews were conducted with 20 Seattle (Washington) residents, each of whom was involved in creativity or creative visioning. The sample defined creative visioning as a process which encourages the pursuit of new possibilities, dimensions, and connections. The inquiry revealed support for an open system that is flexible and relaxed wherein discovery flourishes; a system not bound by rules nor boxed in but that is helpful in developing the self-discipline, skills, and familiarity with history that will enable connections to be made. Extrapolations from the interviews led to recommendations regarding the role schools can play in developing the skills of creative visioning. Teachers and administrators must create an environment that is free of fear, structured but not rigid, tied to history but not chained to one answer, open to new discoveries and connections, respectful of the individual, and touched by the arts, creativity, and imagination. Schools need to move to do all that is possible to promote, nurture, develop, and celebrate creative visioning, risk taking, and the development of courage to see differently, in an atmosphere where new connections can easily occur. (LL)

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CREATIVITY IS A KEY TO THE FUTURE AND TO EDUCATION

The Importance of Creative Visioning

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CREATIVITY IS A KEY TO THE FUTURE AND TO EDUCATION

The Importance of Creative Visioning

Out of a growing sense that creative visioning is a critical skill and ability, a study was carried out to better understand this important aspect of being human. This articles summarizes that study.

An Overview

In the education of young children, there is an opportunity for visioning that touches both learner and teacher. Who can forget the look of wonder that dawns when a child makes a leap, a connection? This ability to make connections is an integral part of being human, an important part of living. From a deep sense that this is a critical ability, a study was made of what enables these leaps and surprises, creative visioning (Cromwell, 1988).

A naturalistic inquiry was made by interviewing 20 people in the Seattle area, each of whom was involved in creativity or creative visioning. These subjects discussed creativity as it touches their lives, and from that information came a synthesis.

The kernel of the synthesis was a poem and story that

attempted to describe the process of creative visioning. The synthesis - a tapestry of creative visioning - was woven together based on the central threads or themes as they emerged from the interviews: the meaning of creative visioning, trusting, imagination, spirituality, connections, intensity, courage and mysticism. These main threads were enriched by a discussion of enablers and blocks.

The Definition

At the beginning and interwoven throughout the interviews, the first issue to understanding the themes emerged; it was the meaning of creative visioning. Strongly present in the literature and even more powerfully in the stories and words of the 20 interviewed was the sense that creative visioning was critically important for every person and even to the future of the world.

The fact that creative visioning exists and is important emerged. It was not easily defined; a distilled, synthesized description of it would seem to be that it is a process based in and touching a deep sense of knowing, enabling one to sense new possibilities, dimensions, and connections. This sense of a process and hope was present in the interviews and woven into the

fabric of the description of the process throughout the talks.

The Threads of the Tapestry of Creative Visioning

Flowing from this sense, and not a boxed definition of the process of creative visioning, were the remaining threads or themes. They emerged and clarified as each interview progressed and were clearest in the artistic expression. Key to this sense of knowing was a thread of trusting. It touched into the need to trust self - especially to trust one's ability to know in a different way through intuition. And yet, this trust was more than in intuition; it was in a sense of knowing that included intuition but moved beyond intuition and logic. It moved into trusting the body's knowing that included reason, logic, intuition and something more - not easily put in a box or into words. What was clear in the interviews was that trusting this sense was key to the process of creative visioning.

Emerging from intuition and perhaps as important came the threads of imagination and connections. The sense of knowing that trusts intuition depends on an ability to imagine. It is a thread that calls to existence and pulls together play, pretending, visioning and the ability to see, feel, and sense in the mind's eye new possibilities

or connections. This touching of intuition and imagination easily led to the thread of connections. All spoke of the importance of making connections to see relationships. It is through wondering and using the imagination that new relationships and new connections are made that enable new visions to be seen.

The new vision brings the person to a place frequently at odds with the norm. This brings up the next threads which were intensity and courage. This being on the edge seemed to bring about an intensity of life that was seen in a person much involved in life and actively seeking new edges, new visions, new connections. This activity called for great risk taking and demanded personal courage. All said that fear was the greatest block to creative visioning. This reiterated the need for courage. It is a courage sometimes unnoticed and quiet and at other times loudly spoken, but always it is a courage to be different, to be at odds, and sometimes be ridiculed. It takes a great courage to be alone with a vision and connections; to move to new heights as yet unseen by others; to be touchingly and powerfully admired and nurtured. It demands the same admiration as the courage of a mother to raise a child. All those interviewed spoke powerfully of this trait - courage.

This sense of knowing that enables the process of

creative visioning touches intuition and imagination and demands trust, intensity and courage. It flows from a deeply centered touching that enables the person to see new possibilities and connections. This deeply centered sense leads to the final thread or theme - spiritualism/mysticism. This is a shimmering thread that surprises and causes awe. It calls to mind E. Paul Torrance when he spoke of creativity that transcends the boundaries of deliberate rational process - a creativity that communicates an instant sense of oneness with all the parts (Torrance and Hall, 1980). This thread spoke of the spiritual, of a sense of mystery. Clearly not magical, this sense of mystery comes because of the deepness of the knowing involved. Alex Osborn (1953), known as the father of the problem solving brainstorming technique and one of the pioneers of this field, called creativity a process as mystical as life itself. There was a sense of mystery and awe related by the interviewees. Creative visioning was seen as a process as mystical as life. The deeper one experiences and knows life, the more profound the process and the more profound the connection and possibilities that could be seen. This is not magic but a sense and call to descent into the depths of life and self. It is there, touching the core of life, that this ability most gives rise, must take place. It is no wonder that one interviewee called this process "incarnational creativity" - a process of bringing this sense of knowing deeply

centered in the person into reality. It is a process that experiences new insights, new consciousness and new connections. It is a process forever on the edge; it is this edge that so many saw as critical and on which so much hope rests.

It is in this rich tapestry of creative visioning, in this descriptive synthesis, that there was an element tied to this last thread that spoke of a dawning of a newness. It is not yet strong enough to stand on its own, nor defined enough even to have the language necessary to fully describe it. This element of newness touches a wonderful sense of creative visioning which is the sense of becoming communal and relational. This may well become the most important insight of this study. Mutuality, communalism and collective consciousness are hinted at in some fields and disciplines. The call for collaboration in education, quality circles, team management, common missions in business and leadership touches this sense of community. This call and sense of a shift can be seen in the discussions of Belenky's (1987) and Gilligan's (1982) works. They not only break new ground but stress mutuality, connectiveness, and ethic of caring that is clearly tied to this same sense of community found in discussions regarding creative visioning. The sense of something new was present - a sense of a collective, relational creative visioning and as one interviewee

stated, the coming of a new paradigm. This new element enmeshed in this thread of the spiritualism/mysticism as part of creative visioning was an intriguing glimpse - perhaps it is the dawning of a new day.

The Needed Implications

A bright light was focused by the 20 people of this study intensely centered on the importance of creative visioning. The implications are simple and represent a profound reality. Creative visioning is needed - the implication is that everyone needs to do all to nurture and support it in self first and then in others. From the people interviewed, a need for creativity moved beyond expanding the basics, broadening the scope of a field or discovering new insights; it moved to an understanding of the need for creative visioning for the very existence of the world, for a growing collective dawning creative biosphere, for an emerging communal sense of creating together, and for deepening of the sense of touching the most profound part of creativity - the sacred. From the 20 voices rose one strong voice yearning for support for an open system that is flexible and relaxed where discoveries and delight are encouraged and praised. It is a system that is not bound by rules nor boxed in but that helps develop the self discipline, skills and familiarity with history that will enable the connections to be made.

Beyond this implication that is personal and universal, there is a specific implication for leaders and especially schools. For leaders, it is to take chances to create and help create environments where mutuality and collective creative visioning can exist. With some bitterness administrators were discussed in the interviews, not with hatred but because they would not see, would not hear, would not sense the knowing, and so did not become models of risk taking based on a vision. Leaders are called to vision and to help bring about new and better realities. The implication from this study is simple; leaders need to be creative visioning people who support and develop creative visioning in self and others.

If the existence of the world, if the deepest kind of knowing is involved, if the most profound sense of touching with the core of life is involved, then creative visioning must be supported, nurtured and developed in schools. At the very least, schools should not cause the bitterness cited in the words of some of those interviewed. Schools should become proactive in their support of this ability and process. Perhaps students could become artists because of school, rather than in spite of it. This means institutions moving into "ambiguous" places and not being able to have all the answers. Mistakes will be made, but so will growth occur.

If fear is allowed to block them, educational institutions will be the same as they have been, educational institutions will be the same as they have been, maybe even sharper but still producing bitterness, tears and rage. For schools, for educational institutions, the message is to listen to the creative visioning of individuals and move to develop, support and nurture individual and then collective creative visioning.

There is hope - perhaps the challenge will be accepted. Each person can celebrate and nurture creative visioning. The importance for leaders to do this seems self-evident. As institutions, schools touch and help form so many people. This critical need of creative visioning must be nurtured and supported within our schools. The call is being sounded. The question now is who will answer.

On a personal basis, a recommendation for all is to touch creative visioning. Even on a small scale by one person interviewing another. As one interviewee said, it is one thing to speak of water and another to be wet. For personal growth and a personal touch of creative visioning the process of sharing and discussing and experiencing creative visioning is of great value.

Beyond the reiteration for further study and for a

personal touching with creative visioning comes recommendations for leaders and schools. The call for creative leaders is great. They need to be risk takers who help create environments that support and nurture creative environments that support and nurture creative visioning. Structure should not be so rigid as to prevent new discoveries, new answers, and new connections. Leaders who trust this ability in themselves help others trust this knowing that comes from deep in self. Leaders can help by preventing environments of criticism, rigidity and fear - all blocks to creative visioning. Perhaps most important, leaders should become creative visioning people who trust that in themselves and do all that is possible to ensure that conditions for others are helpful, supportive and nurturing of this most crucial ability.

Finally, the recommendations move to schools, perhaps the most important places for nurturing and support. Schools need to create environments that promote, support, nurture and celebrate creative visioning. They need to provide those first encounters and ongoing connections to all sorts of creativity - music, art, painting, drama, dance, poetry, fairy tales, pretend games and more. In an environment constantly touched by creativity, schools need to promote risk taking, imagination expanding activities and a climate of openness. In a place where it is all right to make mistakes, new discoveries and delights can

more easily happen. In a place where many answers are possible, new connections can more easily occur. In a place where creative visioning is supported, nurtured and celebrated, creative visioning can more easily happen. Teachers and administrators (teachers with students and administrators with staff and students) need to create an environment free of fear; structured but not rigid; tied to history but not chained to one answer; open to new discoveries, connections and delights; respectful of the individual but aware of a communal aspect of being; touched by the arts, creativity, imagination and the dance of life; filled with a joy and zest for life and learning that promotes risk taking and develops courage to see differently; and ready to be receptive to the wonder and awe of the dance and the spiritual/mystical connections so much a part of creative visioning. Creative visioning is critical and individuals, administrators, leaders, and schools should move to do all that is possible to promote, nurture, develop and celebrate this most critical ability.

A child flies a kite and sees a dance and makes connections. In the quiet of a special place a deep sense of knowing can come that sees the dance of life and makes the connections. From the child learning, making connections, taking leaps - from creative visioning can come a rich picture of the dance.

I listened...

and the dance was heard

deeply, deeply...

and the wonder grew

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